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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at William Rainey Harper College (WRHC) to determine why students withdrew from courses at two off-campus centers. Surveys were administered to a sample of 54 degree credit and 46 continuing education students who withdrew from classes at Hawthorne Center (HC) in fall 1981, and to 56 degree credit and 44 continuing education students who withdrew from classes at Northeast Center in fall 1982. Study findings, based on information from student files and survey responses from 78% of the degree credit students at HC and 89% of those at NC, and from 63% of the continuing education students at HC and 77% of those at NC, included the following: (1) the credit student withdrawal rate at NC (26%) was higher than that for the college as a whole (12%); (2) 16% of the NC students gave the inconvenient location of the center as their primary reason for withdrawal, and 17% cited ineffective teaching; (3) the primary reasons for withdrawal among degree credit students were job pressures, inconvenient location, and course objectives not related to student needs; (4) for continuing education students, the primary reasons for withdrawal were inconvenient class times and personal problems; and (5) 93% of the degree credit students and 74% of the continuing education students who stopped attending NC intended to return to WHRC. The survey instrument and data tables detailing results for both centers are appended. (HB)

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STUDY OF STUDENTS WHO WITHDREW FROM COURSES AT THE HAWTHORNE AND NORTHEAST CENTERS 1981-1982

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ABSTRACT

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY WAS TO DETERMINE WHY STUDENTS WITHDRAW FROM COURSES AT OFF-CAMPUS CENTERS (HAWTHORNE FIRST AND NOW THE NORTHEAST CENTER). SOME 200 DEGREE CREDIT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION (NON-ESL) STUDENTS FROM THESE TWO CENTERS WERE SAMPLED AND SURVEYED. AFTER AN INITIAL MAILING AND APPROPRIATE FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES WERE IMPLEMENTED, RETURN RATES RANGING FROM 63 PERCENT TO 89 PERCENT WERE ATTAINED THUS ASSURING REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY RESULTS.

THE WITHDRAWAL RATE OF DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS FROM THE NORTHEAST CENTER (26%) WAS MUCH HIGHER THAN THE WITHDRAWAL RATE FROM THE GENERAL HARPER STUDENT POPULATION (12%). THIS APPEARS TO BE CAUSED BY THREE PRINCIPAL FACTORS; INCONVENIENCE OF LOCATION, COURSES TAUGHT ALMOST ENTIRELY BY PART-TIME FACULTY AND LESS ACCESS TO STUDENT DEVELOPMENT STAFF (COUNSELORS).

THE PRINCIPAL REASONS MOST OFTEN GIVEN BY DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS FOR WITHDRAWING FROM COURSES AT THESE TWO OFF-CAMPUS CENTERS WERE JOB PRESSURES, INCONVENIENT LOCATION AND COURSE OBJECTIVES NOT MEETING STUDENT NEEDS. CONTINUING EDUCATION STUDENTS DROP FOR A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT MIX OF REASONS; PRIMARILY, THEY CITED INCONVENIENT COURSE TIMES, PERSONAL PROBLEMS, COURSE OBJECTIVES NOT MEETING STUDENT NEEDS, AND JOB PRESSURES.

AMONG THOSE DEGREE STUDENTS WHO DROP AT LEAST ONE COURSE AT THE NORTHEAST CENTER, ONLY A THIRD WITHDRAW COMPLETELY FROM HARPER AND EVEN AMONG THESE STUDENTS, 93 PERCENT PLAN TO RETURN TO HARPER. ALMOST THREE-FOURTHS OF THE CONTINUING EDUCATION STUDENTS WHO DROP COURSES AT THE NORTHEAST CENTER WITHDRAW COMPLETELY FROM HARPER BUT AGAIN THREE-FOURTHS OF THESE STUDENTS PLAN TO RETURN TO HARPER SOON.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
I.	Purpose	1
II.	Population Surveyed	1
III.	Methodology	1-2
IV.	Discussion or Results	2-3
V.	Detailed Results	
	A. Withdrawal Rates.	4
	B. Withdrawal Status	5
	C. Plans to return to Harper	5
	D. Saw a Counselor	5
	E. How student registered for classes.	5
	F. Principle reason student withdrew from course	6
VI.	Appendix	
	A. Withdrawal letter and survey for Hawthorne Center	
	B. Withdrawal letter and survey for Northeast Center	

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine why students withdraw from courses at off-campus centers (Hawthorne first, and now the Northeast Center). The study was requested by William Howard, Director of Continuing Education and Program Services and the staff at the Northeast Center. This is an offshoot of an earlier study on the characteristics of students who attended or are attending classes at these two centers.

POPULATION SURVEYED

Students who withdrew from degree credit classes and continuing education classes in the fall of 1981 at the Hawthorne Center and in the fall of 1982 at the Northeast Center were sampled and surveyed. No ESL classes were included in the samples. After the original mailing of the survey and appropriate follow-up procedures, the following return rates were achieved:

	HAWTHORNE CENTER				NORTHEAST CENTER			
	Degree Credit		Continuing Education		Degree Credit		Continuing Education	
	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT
Mail Responses	21	38.9	16	34.8	26	46.4	19	43.2
Telephone Responses	21	38.9	13	28.2	24	42.9	15	34.1
Sub-Total Respondents	42	77.8	29	63.0	50	89.3	34	77.3
Non-Forwardables	2	3.7	8	17.4	6	10.7	2	4.5
Refused to Answer	1	1.8	2	4.4	0	0	5	11.4
Unable to Reach	9	16.7	7	15.2	0	0	3	6.8
Sub-Total Non-Respondents	12	22.2	17	37.0	6	10.7	10	22.7
Total Sample	54	100.0	46	100.0	56	100.0	44	100.0

As can be seen from the table, a 78 to 89 percent return rate was obtained for degree-credit students while a 63 to 77 percent rate was achieved for continuing education students. A much higher return rate was attained on the Northeast Center students. This was probably due to the timing of the survey. The Hawthorne students were surveyed about one year after they withdrew while the Northeast Center students were polled only two months after they withdrew. Interestingly, the survey response rate among those who withdrew was as high as that attained from students who were polled in the earlier characteristics survey. The response rate is high enough to insure that the withdrawals who responded are representative of all the withdrawals

METHODOLOGY

The surveys in the appendix were developed jointly by the staff at the NEC and the Office of Planning and Institutional Research. The survey of students

attending classes at the Hawthorne Center was mailed to their homes August 7, 1982, and those not responding were mailed a second survey 3½ weeks later. Over the next six months those still not responding were telephoned and information was obtained over the telephone. For the NEC survey, the selected students received their questionnaire in the mail some time after December 6, 1982. One month later a second mailing was made to the non-respondents. Those still not responding were surveyed over the telephone in the next two-month period. Additional information was gathered from student files and data obtained in this study was compared to an earlier study of students who withdrew from all degree credit classes at Harper.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Student record data indicated that the student withdrawal rate at Northeast Center (26%) was much higher than the withdrawal rate for the whole college (12%). The withdrawal rate for continuing education students is 16 percent at the Northeast Center. No comparable data is available for college-wide continuing education students.

The higher withdrawal rate among degree-credit students at the Northeast Center appears to be caused by three factors. One factor is that the location is inconvenient for many students. Among the withdrawals at Northeast Center, almost 16 percent give this as the primary reason for dropping while among all students at Harper withdrawing, less than one half of one percent give this as the primary reason. The second factor is that at the off-campus locations almost all courses are taught by part-time faculty which leads to more complaints about ineffective teaching and dislike of the courses. At the Northeast Center, 17 percent of the students said their primary reason for withdrawing was because of an ineffective teacher while overall at Harper among all withdrawals only 8 percent gave this as a primary reason. Similarly, 7 percent at Northeast Center said they disliked the course they dropped while almost none of the overall drops were for this reason. The third factor is that fewer students at the off-campus locations ever see counselors. Among degree-credit students withdrawing from courses at Northeast Center, 76 percent report never seeing a counselor while among all degree-credit drops at Harper, only 44 percent report never seeing a counselor.

Looking at withdrawals from both centers, the three primary reasons for dropping given most frequently by degree-credit students were job pressures (19½%), inconvenient location (13%), and course objectives not relating to student needs (12½%). Considering continuing education students at both centers, the primary reasons for withdrawing given most frequently were times were too inconvenient (20%), personal problems (19½%), course objectives not relating to student needs (19½%), and job pressures (15%).

At the Northeast Center, just over a third of the degree-credit students who drop at least one course withdraw completely from Harper while among continuing education students this proportion is over three-fourths. Considering those Northeast Center students who do withdraw completely from Harper, 93 percent of the degree-credit group plans to return to Harper while 74 percent of the continuing education group plans to return to Harper.

Among those withdrawing from courses at Northeast Center, some 36 percent of the

degree-credit students and 72 percent of the continuing education students registered by telephone. This is about the same proportions as for all students who register by telephone. Previous studies have shown those registering by telephone are no more apt to withdraw from courses than those registering in person.

W I T H D R A W A L R A T E S

Northeast Center versus Overall Harper

Degree Credit Classes	Northeast Center Fall 1982 N	Northeast Center Fall 1982 PCT	Harper - Overall Academic Year 1981-1982 N	Harper - Overall Academic Year 1981-1982 PCT
Total Withdrawals	326	25.8	10,157	12.1
Total Grades Given	1,265	100.0	84,197	100.0
Continuing Education Classes				
Total Withdrawals	149	15.8	Not Available	
Total Grades Given	941	100.0	Not Available	

Withdrawal Status	HAWTHORNE CENTER Degree Credit N	PCT	Cont. Education N	PCT	NORTHEAST CENTER Degree Credit N	PCT	Cont. Education N	PCT	1979-1982 Overall Harper Degree Credit PCT
Withdrew from one course but still enrolled at Harper	12	28.6	1	3.7	28	56.0	8	23.5	67.6
Withdrew from more than one course but still enrolled at Harper	3	7.1	1	3.7	4	8.0	0	0	11.4
Completely withdrew from Harper	27	64.3	25	92.6	18	36.0	26	76.5	21.0
Total	42	100.0	27	100.0	50	100.0	34	100.0	100.0
If withdrew completely from Harper, plans to return to Harper									
Yes	19	76.0	16	76.2	14	93.3	18½	74.0	71.0
No	6	24.0	5	23.8	1	6.7	6½	26.0	29.0
Total	25	100.0	21	100.0	15	100.0	25	100.0	100.0
Last time student saw a counselor									
This semester	4	9.8	1	3.6	8	16.0	0	0	32.6
Past semesters	11	26.8	3	10.7	4	8.0	1	2.9	23.9
Never saw a counselor	26	63.4	24	85.7	38	76.0	33	97.1	43.5
Total	41	100.0	28	100.0	50	100.0	34	100.0	100.0
How student registered for Classes									
By Telephone	15	35.7	19	73.1	18	36.0	23	71.9	25.0
In person	27	64.3	7	26.9	32	64.0	9	28.1	75.0
Total	42	100.0	26	100.0	50	100.0	32	100.0	100.0

PRINCIPLE REASON STUDENT WITHDREW FROM COURSE

Principle Reason	Hawthorne Center				Northeast Center				Both Centers				1979-1982 Harper Overall
	Degree Credit		Cont. Education		Degree Credit		Cont. Education		Degree Credit		Cont. Education		Degree Credit
	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT	PCT
Job pressures or offered a new job	10.00	23.8	4.00	14.3	8.00	16.0	5.50	16.2	18.00	19.6	9.50	15.3	12.7
Personal, Family or Illness Problems	3.20	7.6	6.00	21.4	5.00	10.0	6.00	17.6	8.20	8.9	12.00	19.4	16.5
Times course met proved inconvenient	3.70	8.8	7.50	26.8	2.20	4.4	5.00	14.7	5.90	6.4	12.50	20.2	15.2
Location proved to be inconvenient	4.25	10.1	3.50	12.5	7.84	15.7	2.50	7.4	12.09	13.1	6.00	9.7	.4
Course objectives did not relate to student's needs	3.00	7.2	4.50	16.0	1.33	2.7	7.50	22.0	4.33	4.7	12.00	19.4	14.5
Instructor was ineffective	2.87	6.8	0	0	8.50	17.0	2.00	5.9	11.37	12.4	2.00	3.2	7.8
Disliked course	3.50	8.3	1.00	3.6	3.67	7.3	2.00	5.9	7.17	7.8	3.00	4.8	.3
Financial problems	5.20	12.4	0	0	1.50	3.0	.50	1.5	6.70	7.3	.50	.8	1.5
Carrying too heavy a course load	2.00	4.8	0	0	3.20	6.4	.50	1.5	5.20	5.7	.50	.8	12.8
Inadequately prepared for course	2.20	5.2	0	0	1.70	3.4	1.00	2.9	3.90	4.2	1.00	1.6	11.4
Course demanded too much	0	0	0	0	2.53	5.0	1.00	2.9	2.53	2.8	1.00	1.6	.5
Course(s) cancelled	0	0	0	0	2.00	4.0	0	0	2.00	2.2	0	0	.4
Was accepted for transfer to another college	1.00	2.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.00	1.1	0	0	.9
Text arrived too late	0	0	0	0	.50	1.0	.50	1.5	.50	.5	.50	.8	.1
Was able to test out of course	0	0	1.00	3.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.00	1.6	.1
Did not like facilities	0	0	0	0	1.00	2.0	0	0	1.00	1.1	0	0	0
Transportation problems getting to class	.45	1.1	0	0	.50	1.0	0	0	.95	1.0	0	0	1.2
Wanted to audit and could not	.50	1.2	0	0	.33	.7	0	0	.83	.9	0	0	.1
Cost of course was too high	0	0	.50	1.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	.50	.8	0
Too far behind - Grades too low	0	0	0	0	.20	.4	0	0	.20	.2	0	0	1.3
Class equipment not readily available	.13	.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	.13	.1	0	0	.1
Moved out of area	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.0
Entered Military service	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.1
Registration Error	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.1
Total	42	100.0	28	100.0	50	100.0	34	100.0	92	100.0	62	100.0	100.0

N = 9947

APPENDIX

William Rainey Harper College
Algonquin and Roselle Roads
Palatine, Illinois 60067
312-397-3000

July 30, 1982

Dear Hawthorne Student:

We are surveying all students who withdrew from Harper College courses at Hawthorne during this last fall semester. The purpose of this study is to identify why students withdraw from courses at Hawthorne in order that we may better plan the offerings at our community center locations. We are asking your cooperation by completing the enclosed short questionnaire and returning it in the stamped addressed envelope provided. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

John A. Lucas

John A. Lucas
Director of Planning and Institutional Research

JAL/sl

HAWTHORNE STUDENT WITHDRAWAL SURVEY

1. What is the principal reason you withdrew from this course(s) or from Harper? Check (✓) the one principal reason.

_____ A. The course objectives did not relate to my needs.
_____ B. The times the course met proved to be too inconvenient.
_____ C. The instructor(s) were ineffective.
_____ D. Personal, family or illness problems.
_____ E. Job pressures or I was offered a new job.
_____ F. I am moving out of the area.
_____ G. I was inadequately prepared for course.
_____ H. Transportation problems getting to Harper.
_____ I. Financial problems.
_____ J. Was carrying too heavy of a course load.
_____ K. Was accepted for transfer to another college.
_____ L. Course(s) was cancelled.
_____ M. Hawthorne location was too inconvenient.
_____ N. Too far behind - grades were too low.
_____ O. Course demanded too much.
_____ P. Wanted to audit and couldn't.
_____ Q. Disliked course.
_____ R. Text arrived too late.
_____ S. Entered military.
_____ T. Was able to test out of course.
_____ U. Registration error.
_____ V. Other (specify)_____

2. What was your withdrawal status in the fall at Hawthorne? Check (✓) one.

_____ A. Withdrew from one course, but was still enrolled at Harper.
_____ B. Withdrew from more than one course, but was still enrolled at Harper.
_____ C. Completely withdrew from Harper College.

If C, do you plan to return to Harper? _____ Yes _____ No

3. When did you see a counselor? Check (✓) one.

_____ A. This semester.
_____ B. Past semesters.
_____ C. Never saw a counselor.

4. How did you register for your course(s) at Hawthorne?

_____ A. By phone.
_____ B. In person.

5. General comments about courses at Hawthorne. _____

_____

William Rainey Harper College
Algonquin and Roselle Roads
Palatine, Illinois 60067
312-397-3000

January 3, 1983

Dear Northeast Center Student:

We are surveying all students who withdrew from Harper College courses at Northeast Center during this last fall semester. The purpose of this study is to identify why students withdraw from courses at Northeast Center in order that we may better plan the offerings at our community center locations. We are asking your cooperation by completing the enclosed short questionnaire and returning it in the stamped addressed envelope provided with this letter.

Thank you for your assistance.

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE

John A. Lucas

John A. Lucas, Director
Planning and Institutional Research

JAL:jc
Enclosure

NORTHEAST CENTER STUDENT WITHDRAWAL SURVEY

1. What is the principal reason you withdrew from this course(s) or from Harper? Check (✓) the one principal reason.

_____ A. The course objectives did not relate to my needs.
_____ B. The times the course met proved to be too inconvenient
_____ C. The instructor(s) were ineffective
_____ D. Personal, family or illness problems
_____ E. Job pressures or I was offered a new job
_____ F. I am moving out of the area
_____ G. I was inadequately prepared for course
_____ H. Transportation problems getting to Harper
_____ I. Financial problems
_____ J. Was carrying too heavy of a course load
_____ K. Was accepted for transfer to another college
_____ L. Course(s) was canceled.
_____ M. Northeast Center location was too inconvenient
_____ N. Too far behind - grades were too low
_____ O. Course demanded too much
_____ P. Wanted to audit and couldn't
_____ Q. Disliked course
_____ R. Text arrived too late
_____ S. Entered military
_____ T. Was able to test out of course
_____ U. Registration error
_____ V. Other (specify)_____
_____
_____

2. What was your withdrawal status in the fall at Northeast Center? Check (✓) one

_____ A. Withdrew from one course, but was still enrolled at Harper.
_____ B. Withdrew from more than one course, but was still enrolled at Harper.
_____ C. Completely withdrew from Harper College.

If C, do you plan to return to Harper? _____ Yes _____ No

3. When did you see a counselor? Check (✓) one

_____ A. This semester
_____ B. Past semesters
_____ C. Never saw a counselor

4. How did you register for your course(s) at Northeast Center?

_____ A. By telephone
_____ B. In person

5. General comments about courses at Northeast Center_____
_____
_____
_____

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